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ABSTRACT

The principles set forth in these guidelines articulate a clear standard, endorsed by the Massjobs Council, of what constitutes effective service delivery and program management for literacy and basic skills. They are of use to local agencies in developing programs and to Regional Employment Boards in evaluating them. Section I sets forth the goals for an effective statewide literacy system and lists the elements such a system must include to achieve these goals. Section II discusses the elements of service delivery for effective programs, including recruitment, intake/orientation, assessment, the instructional component, support services, and follow-up. Each element is described, and an effective approach to each element is outlined. Section III addresses the following elements of program management for effective adult literacy and basic skills programs: program development, the staffing component, staff development, tracking/reporting/data collection, program evaluation, fiscal management, coordination with other programs, and governance. As in Section II, each element is described, and an effective approach is recommended. A special note to Regional Employment Boards and their Literacy Committee is included as an addendum. It gives suggestions for use of this booklet, adaptation of the goals for a particular region, review of literacy proposals, and development of quality programs. (YLB)

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Principles for Effective Literacy and Basic Skills Programs

December, 1990

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Board of Regents
Commonwealth Literacy Campaign
Department of Education
Department of Employment & Training
Department of Public Welfare
Industrial Services Program
Office of Communities & Development
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Massachusetts Interagency Literacy Group

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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSJOBS COUNCIL

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Co-Chairs

Alden S. Raine
Co-Chairs

Jack A. King
Judith C. Gilbert
Staff Directors

Over the past few years it has become clearer and clearer to those of us involved in shaping policy for the state's employment and training system that literacy services are a critical foundation for our efforts to ensure a workforce and a citizenry equal to the demands of the twenty-first century. For this reason, the Massjobs Council has established a literacy committee of its own -- the Interagency Literacy Group -- and mandated that each of the state's 15 Regional Employment Boards also establish literacy committees to help them in their work of planning and policy development for comprehensive regional education and training systems.

These Guidelines for Effective Literacy and Basic Skills Programs were developed by the Interagency Literacy Group and represent a consensus of the 10 agencies that currently fund literacy services. They articulate a clear universal standard, endorsed by the Massjobs Council, of what constitutes effective service delivery and program management for literacy and basic skills. As such they should be useful both to local agencies in developing programs and to REBs in evaluating them. Since the Guidelines place this standard within the context of an equally clear portrait of what constitutes an effective literacy system, they should also be useful to REBs and other local planning agencies in developing priorities for meeting the needs of constituents.

We are delighted to make these Guidelines available to you as part of our own on-going efforts to develop a strong statewide education and training system that meets the needs of key groups of adults for assistance in becoming self sufficient as well as the needs of Massachusetts employers for a highly skillled workforce.

Sincerely,

Anthony R. Sapienza

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VISION

Since 1987 the state secretariats, departments and agencies that make up the Interagency Literacy Group have been working together to enhance and expand opportunities for literacy and basic skills education for the adults of this commonwealth. Our agencies are committed by state and federal law to assist a broad range of adults to improve their ability to access the basic necessities of life — including food, clothing, shelter and health care — for themselves and their families, and to participate fully in the economic, political and educational life of their communities, exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

The constituencies our agencies serve include men and women of every background and every age seeking to develop the basic skills they need: to help their children succeed in school, to advance their own careers, to achieve a personal goal like gaining a driver's license or reading the Bible, to work with their neighbors to improve conditions in their communities, or, most basic of all, to support their empowerment as active contributors within their families and the world around them.

Our constituencies include...

- skilled workers dislocated in a rapidly changing labor market who seek access to retraining and to re-employment in jobs with comparable wages...

- entry-level workers who seek education and training to maintain employment in a workplace with changing job responsibilities...

- men and women who have not yet developed the skills

necessary to qualify for employment at a decent wage and who seek education and training...

- immigrants and refugees who seek to develop the English language skills necessary to participate fully in their new communities...

- teen parents and other single heads of household who seek access to education, training and employment in order to end their dependence on public assistance...

- residents of public housing who seek better living conditions and a way out of poverty...

- men and women who are unemployed or underemployed, who may be homeless and who seek assistance to prevent or end long-term dependency...

- men and women incarcerated in our county and state houses of corrections who seek education and training to rehabilitate their lives...

- senior citizens who seek to improve their literacy skills in order to realize a lifelong dream

Our partners include organizations whose success depends upon the literacy skills of their constituencies:

- unions that seek to provide their members with better skills and better working conditions...and

- employers that seek a workforce with the strong basic skills necessary to qualify for today's and tomorrow's jobs.

We know our agencies cannot fulfill our mandated responsibilities to these constituencies unless we also increase access to quality literacy and basic skills services. This joint statement of guidelines for an effective literacy system and for effective literacy and basic skills programs grows out of our work over the past three years in forging a common workforce literacy agenda for Massachusetts. Given current fiscal restraints, we have not been successful in generating the resources necessary to support our Workforce Literacy Plan. However, we affirm our commitment to continue to work together to support policies within our agencies and across state government that encourage the development and support of a system and of programs that embody the guidelines below.

I. GOALS FOR AN EFFECTIVE STATEWIDE LITERACY SYSTEM

In the Massachusetts Workforce Literacy Plan the Interagency Literacy Group committed itself to the goal of creating a cohesive, coordinated and flexible system, accessible to the full range of adult learners. Such a system would:

- provide services that are part of a continuum, enabling learners to move in an orderly progression through services from beginning to advanced ESL, from beginning literacy through GED preparation to advanced training and higher education;

- provide services that are culturally appropriate and respond to the adult as a whole person, whose literacy needs must be addressed in the context of other life needs such as work, housing, child care, and so forth;

- provide services at times and places and in such a manner as to overcome barriers to adult participation in literacy and basic skills programs;

- provide services that are learner-centered: with respect to both content and structure, adults are treated as full partners in the educational process;

- provide services that prepare adults for employment and training, enhancing economic opportunity for today and for the future.

In order to achieve these goals, an effective statewide literacy system must include the following elements:

- comprehensive literacy services (including support services such as counseling, child care and transportation, as necessary) provided within the context of adults' daily lives: in neighborhoods; in public housing; in the workplace; in relevant community-based organizations; and in social, cultural and religious organizations;

- the capacity to provide for outreach, recruitment, and on-going motivation and support that are appropriate to each population served;

- highly trained professional administrative, teaching and counseling staff;

- appropriate use of volunteers to enhance and enrich literacy services;

- mechanisms that support working partnerships between providers and funding agencies;

- program evaluation mechanisms that identify effective ways to provide literacy services to each population targeted;

- clearly articulated accountability mechanisms that ensure the best use of public resources and simplify existing reporting and refunding processes;

- mechanisms for periodic review of policies and programs to ensure that the system is responsive to demographic, economic and labor market changes.

In the policies we set within our own agencies, in our work together as part of the Interagency Literacy Group, and in our work with Regional Employment Boards and other local planning and decision-making bodies, our agencies will work to put in place and strengthen the infrastructure for a system that includes these elements. We will also work to ensure that our approach to funding is responsive to local needs and to priorities established through local planning as well as to statewide needs and priorities. Our expectation is that effective programs will see themselves as part of this system and will be guided both by these goals and by the elements for effective service delivery and program management detailed in Sections II and III of this document.

II. ELEMENTS OF SERVICE DELIVERY FOR EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

In order to provide quality services to adult learners, literacy and basic skills programs must have well-defined and well-integrated mechanisms to address the following:

Recruitment *helps people find out about literacy programs and how to enter them.* An effective approach to recruitment:

- actively reaches into the communities the program intends to serve, making use of established and trusted channels for sharing information within those communities, and;

- honestly explains the program in language that is clearly understood by the people who will be served.

Intake/Orientation *gives the prospective learner a clear picture of program services and expectations. This information allows adults to determine whether a particular program will help them meet their goals.* An effective approach to intake/orientation:

- brings the learner as a full partner into the goal-setting process;

- clearly explains what the learner may expect as the outcome of participation in the program, and;

- clearly explains the program's expectations of the learner.

Assessment is an ongoing process. It begins with an initial assessment that reliably evaluates the adult's skills, goals, needs, and preferred learning styles. Ongoing assessment provides a measure of the learner's progress within the instructional program at periodic intervals. An effective approach to assessment:

- uses a methodology that gives good information about the learner and is well-aligned to the instructional program;
- is conducted in a manner that minimizes anxiety, maximizes the learner's comfort level, and is no longer than necessary to determine effective placement;
- leads directly to the development of an individual education plan;
- provides information that leads to appropriate instructional placement, support services, or referral to another program or agency if necessary, and;
- provides constant feedback to learners about their progress.

The Instructional Component enables adults to build basic skills (reading, writing, math, communication and survival) within a context that is relevant to and respectful of the learners. An effective instructional component:

- addresses the needs of the learner as indicated both by initial and ongoing assessment;
- uses methodologies and materials which match the learning styles of adults;

- applies an instructional setting (group, one-on-one, etc.), an intensity (hrs./wk.), and a teacher-student ratio that is appropriate to the type and level of services (see Attachment A: the Department of Education's "Guidelines for Program Design" for suggested guidelines);

- establishes cycles that run long enough for the learner to acquire and practice new skills;

- includes sufficient instructional levels for the range of learners it serves, and;

- is available at times, places and in languages most appropriate to program participants.

Support Services *enable adult learners to participate fully in literacy/basic skills programs. Depending on the population served by a given program, key services may include day care, transportation, and counseling around such issues as education, employment, housing, immigration, health and substance abuse.* An effective approach to support services:

- provides access to appropriate support services;

- offers these services either directly or through linkages with outside agencies or organizations, and;

- includes on-site provision of educational and personal counseling that helps the learner persist until completion of his/her educational goals.

Follow-up pro-actively connects adults to the next steps in their educational plans. An effective approach to follow-up:

- tracks the progress of each learner after leaving the program, for whatever reason;

- "re-recruits" non-completers, making adjustments in the program where necessary to better meet learner needs, and;

- supports learners who have successfully moved on to a new setting, whether it be training, advanced education or employment.

III. ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM MANAGEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE ADULT LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS PROGRAMS

Effective literacy and basic skills programs include structural components which ensure the delivery of quality services. These elements are integral to each other and to the successful functioning of the program.

***Program Development** is the process by which new components, services, curricula and materials are researched and implemented in response to periodic assessment of client needs and program effectiveness.* An effective approach to program development:

- tracks demographics to respond to changes in the learner population;
- reviews program outcomes and evaluation results to correct weaknesses in program design;
- reviews current literature in the field to update curricula;
- initiates interaction with other programs to facilitate better coordination of information and resources, and;
- solicits input from staff, advisory groups, learners, and the broader community in order to maintain and strengthen program vitality and relevance.

The Staffing Component ensures that personnel resources are adequate and that staff perform effectively. An effective approach to staffing:

- develops clear, comprehensive job descriptions with appropriate salaries, benefits, and opportunities for growth;
- builds a staff that includes members from the same cultural and ethnic groups as the learners;
- maintains appropriate teacher/student ratios, and;
- maintains effective organizational structures for adequate supervision.

Staff Development facilitates the continuing professional growth and education of program staff. An effective approach to staff development:

- ensures opportunities for all program staff to attend orientation, training, and staff development activities;
- incorporates staff input into developmental goals and performance criteria for a staff performance evaluation system, and;
- ensures that staff development training includes cultural sensitivity and awareness.

Tracking/Reporting/Data Collection provides a program and its funding sources with evidence of the program's impact on learners. An effective approach to data collection:

- compiles summary data on student characteristics, enrollments, outcomes, applications, waiting lists;
- includes a methodology for tracking student progress, and;
- collects information useful for program planning as well as monitoring program effectiveness.

Program Evaluation assesses overall program effectiveness, including the appropriateness of services and the quality of instruction. An effective approach to evaluation:

- includes formative evaluation of program design and start-up, monitoring of on-going program performance, and intensive, periodic summative evaluation studies;
- examines program enrollment in terms of the needs and characteristics of the learner population;
- reviews student progress and program outcomes on a regular basis, including number of dropouts and reasons for non-participation;
- compares actual activities to those planned or to program goals, and;
- includes feedback mechanisms which ensure that evaluation results are incorporated into program design and delivery of services.

***Fiscal Management** ensures the collection and maintenance of fiscal information adequate to meet Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), funding source reporting requirements, and program budgetary needs.* An effective approach to fiscal management:

- establishes an agency/program fiscal year and an accompanying fiscal year budget for each program, by funding source;
- maintains a fund accounting system for recording and monitoring expenditures against budget;
- supports the timely preparation of expenditure reports.

***Coordination With Other Programs** offers learners access to the broadest possible range of available services and programs.* An effective approach to coordination:

- includes interagency referral agreements (formal and informal);
- encourages regular communication among programs, including membership on or attendance at local/regional committees, and;
- links staff and students of different programs through networking, cross-training, or joint training.

Governance should provide an adequate and appropriate assignment of authority in order to ensure effective administration and accountability. An effective approach to governance:

- includes a Board of Directors or Advisory Board whose membership represents the composition of the community served;

- includes by-laws that establish clear roles and responsibilities;

- establishes a system of checks and balances between the governing body and staff, and;

- has the governing body serve a productive role in determining program goals and priorities and in reviewing program and fiscal activities.

ADDENDUM:
A SPECIAL NOTE TO REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARDS AND THEIR LITERACY COMMITTEES

These *Principles for Effective Literacy and Basic Skills Programs* have special significance for Regional Employment Boards and their Literacy Committees. This explicit picture of strong literacy programs and systems will help in your efforts to develop and implement appropriate literacy plans for your region. We urge you to review each section carefully and use to this document as a point of reference and guide:

- for developing an inclusive vision for the literacy and basic skills delivery system in your area;
- for setting goals and priorities responsive to the needs and resources of your region;
- for reviewing proposals to fund specific literacy and basic skills services, and;
- for reviewing the performance and management of local programs in the context of your regional goals.

Goals for Your Region

The ***goals*** described in Section I for an effective literacy system at the state level mirror those that you have established for your local area. As you review the menu of services currently available in your local area, you will want to determine the degree to which your system provides:

- a continuum of services that covers the full spectrum of

learners from beginning ESL and ABE through GED and into college, with supportive services needed by the range of adults seeking a better education and a better life;

- services that are culturally appropriate for the population that resides in your area — changing, as necessary, as the population changes;

- services at a variety of times and places to accommodate the needs of different learners, from those available for full time education to those working regular jobs;

- services that are learner-centered, where the learner has considerable input into learning goals and the approach to instruction;

- education services that are explicitly linked to employment and training opportunities for adults.

The *ILG Survey of Literacy Resources* offers a good base of information from which to begin your analysis of the local system. The CLC plans to update the survey early in 1991.

Once you have determined the comprehensiveness of your existing literacy and basic skills system, you will want to do two things:

- identify gaps in services that should be priorities for future funding, and

- evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs to determine the extent to which they are meeting needs.

Reviewing Literacy Proposals

The key elements for strong literacy programs described in this pamphlet can also be used as a guide for ***evaluating individual proposals*** for education services. While various funding agencies may structure their RFPs differently, they all seek to fund programs that include the critical elements for service delivery and program management described in sections II and III. In reviewing proposals, REB Literacy Committees should become familiar with the mandates and specifications for each RFP.

Within this framework, Literacy Committees can determine the extent to which a given proposal makes best use of available funds by using the critical elements as a checklist. Does the proposal address each of these elements? Does the program seem to have a well articulated plan for each element of service delivery and program management? Literacy Committees should keep in mind when judging proposals that a program's ability to address these elements is limited by available resources.

Quality Programs: Good Performance and Strong Management

It takes more than reading a funding proposal or quarterly performance reports to determine whether a given program is operating at full potential, in response to a significant need. To make informed judgments, it is essential for REB Literacy Committees to develop a hands-on knowledge of area literacy resources. Beyond reading proposals and reports this suggests:

- REB Literacy Committees might schedule a presentation by one or more area literacy providers as a part of each

committee meeting. The presentation could focus on the key elements outlined in this pamphlet.

- REB Literacy Committees might schedule meetings at local literacy programs, rotating through the community so that over time all the major literacy resources have been toured.

- REB Literacy Committees might work with one or more state agencies to undertake quality reviews of specific service delivery or management elements across programs. Particularly effective approaches could be shared across the region; in cases where a specific program has not developed a viable approach, the REB Literacy Committee will want to work with the local provider and appropriate state or regional agencies to assure the resources or technical assistance necessary.

ATTACHMENT A

Chart 1: Dept. of Education Guidelines for Program Design*
Class Size and Hours

Service Category	Class Size		Instructional Hours to Complete Category	Minimal Contact Hours	Hours of Instruction Per Week	
	Range	Optimal			Range	Optimal
Beginner ESL (SPL 0-4)	11-25	15	450-700	125-150	3-25	6-15
Intermediate ESL (SPL 5-6+)	11-25	15	300-450	100	3-25	6-15
Advanced ESL (SPL 7-10)	11-25	15	200-300	50	3-25	6-15
ABE (Grade Levels 0-5.9)	5-10	8	650-900	200	4-25	6-12
Pre-ASE (Grade Levels 6-8.9)	5-15	10	150-300	65	4-20	6-15
ASE (Grade Levels 9-12)	9-15	12	120-300	20	4-20	6-15

*For DOE's definitions of the terms in this chart, see the original document entitled *DOE/SDA ABE Guidelines*, page 22

The Interagency Literacy Group (ILG) is made up of representatives of the state agencies that fund literacy services. They include:

Sondra Stein ..... Commonwealth Literacy Campaign
Robert Bickerton ..... Department of Education
Kathy Carroll Day .... Department of Employment and Training
Sandra Tishman ..... Department of Public Welfare
Paul Kerrigan ..... Office of Communities and Development
Martin Blatt ..... Office of Labor
David Rosenberg ..... Office of Refugees and Immigrants
Shelley Quezada ..... Board of Library Commissioners
Marian Darlington Hope ..... Board of Regents
Lisa Richards ..... Industrial Services Program
Judith Gilbert ..... MassJobs Council

Principles is one of several documents produced by the ILG as part of our effort to ensure a better coordinated, more effective statewide literacy service delivery system. These documents include:

The Mass. Workforce Literacy Plan (1987)
Survey of Literacy Services in Massachusetts: Report & Directory (1989)
Principles for Effective Literacy and Basic Skills Programs (1990)

All documents have been produced, published and distributed by the Commonwealth Literacy Campaign on behalf of the ILG. Printing and distribution of both the *Survey* and *Principles* were supported by small grants from the U.S. Department of Labor.

These documents may be freely photocopied. ~~A limited number of additional copies may also be obtained by writing to the CLC at 100 Nashua Street, Room 946, Boston, MA 02114, or call 617-727-5717~~.

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